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WHAT COÖPERATION HAS DONE FOR WOMEN*

BY MRS. HELEN AVERY ROBINSON

President of the Woman's Club, Louisville, Kentucky

ONE of the honors that have come to me as presiding officer of the Woman's Club is this of addressing you to-day, and I realize my twofold pleasure and duty both as regards my own organization and yours.

The logical reason for my speaking is that I shall tell you who are making an effort toward state organization and legislation what coöperation has done for us.

It has done everything. It is our mainstay, and the basic principle from which all our splendid results are gained. It has bound us strongly together, and, as a club, we have coöperated with other clubs to form our State Federation, and again with other state organizations to form the General Federation of Women's Clubs, which to-day numbers eight hundred thousand women. Without coöperation, these would be an incoherent mass of individuals; with organization and coöperation, it is an august body which is one of the most potent influences for good or ill in the social and political life of the nation.

Think what that means—eight hundred thousand good women uniting in efforts to further reform and improvement in their many communities.

I cannot conceive that this influence should ever be other than good, for I believe what one speaker at the Biennial said, that "American women are the conservators of the intellectual and ethical life and culture of this country, and their clubs are a national crown of glory. They have been receptive for generations, and are now equipped for active service. The best aspirations of the times have become a part of their intellectual and moral fibre. They are the vestals of the temple of liberty, and their ability to elevate the standard of citizenship and life is beyond the possibility of measurement."

At the Biennial meetings of the Federation, one realizes what coöperation means in large ways.

The movement against child labor originated in our Federation in 1897, and grew until, in 1904, the present Standard Child Labor Law was framed and presented by a committee of which Miss Jane Addams was chairman. The women are still working, but have turned the body of the work over to the National Child Labor Committee, whose secre-

* Address at the organization of the Kentucky State Association of Graduate Nurses.

tary, Mr. Samuel McCune Lindsay, says that this law gives the most progressive platform for child labor agitation that has been presented in this country.

All this has been done by coöperation, and if you had heard one man after another representing Pure Food, Forestry, Free Art, Saving Niagara, and many other worthy bills before Congress, urge the influence of the Federation in these matters, you would realize how great coöperation for worthy aims has made that influence.

In our own Woman's Club, we, in our early days, did splendid work in connection with our Charity Organization in emergencies here in Louisville. This developed among us the idea of the Emergency Association, which is composed of all important women's organizations in the city, and is the means, in times of public emergency, of giving aid whenever needed without loss of time, and reaches over four hundred women for this work.

We established play-grounds for children in the congested districts, and later turned this work over to the Citizens' League.

We launched the Consumers' League work in the state, inaugurated the Public Bath movement, and much more which I shall not enumerate.

I have told you this so that you may realize some of the good results of coöperation in our club, which could not so easily have come without this pressure and impulse.

Again, many helpful ideas are born that would perhaps never have been expressed nor have been possible of concrete result without coöperation.

Lack of coöperation and organization is like a blow dealt with the open palm, which amounts to little compared to that dealt by the hand coördinated into a fist. In using this illustration, however, I do not advocate aggression. It is not the best method for women's work, though occasionally it must be resorted to; but I do urge you to associate yourselves together in one organization, and that your aim shall be the good of the whole.

Remember that difference of opinion in such bodies should be the means of developing splendid discussions by which you will grow and develop and your scope enlarge.

If it is wise and helpful for physicians and professional men to coöperate for mutual benefits and legal protection, it is wise for you nurses to do the same thing. You need to protect your own interests, and in doing this you protect those of the community, which turns with reliance to its nurses, as to its physicians. Its sense of security in you will be increased if the State protects your rights as graduate

and trained nurses against those who can now so easily claim the same position without the same training. If you form yourselves into an association, your position will be dignified and secure. You will all agree with me that it is not enough for us as individuals to work for our individual welfare.

So I urge you to associate yourselves into clubs, no matter how small, in every town where there are two, three, or more of you; then let these clubs federate. Discuss and decide just what you want to ask of the legislature, and have some lawyer friend help you formulate your bill, so that there may be no mistakes or confusion of ideas. You will be sure ultimately to get what you earnestly and worthily ask, and you will be amazed and encouraged to find how your horizon will widen and your possibilities as an organization increase. Seize your opportunity now. Opportunities are gifts from heaven, and we should not lose one.

FORMALDEHYDE AS A DISINFECTANT

THERE is one important point in room disinfection which is not generally considered even by those with knowledge, and that is that fumigation with a gas like formaldehyde does not cease its good work when the room is again occupied. It is absorbed to a certain extent by most surfaces, especially clothing, paper, and varnishes, and so continues to act upon germs already there and such as may come later for some time. It is well established that a weak disinfectant acting for a long time is frequently as effective as a strong one acting a short time. The presence of formaldehyde has been found on the surface of walls for weeks after they have been exposed to it. Hence the failure of substances to be sterilized at once is no proof of lack of action of a disinfectant in a room. In the same line the writer has seen most remarkable results follow the occasional use of weak solutions of formaldehyde on the floors of schoolhouses—solutions so weak that they gave no disagreeable odor. Infectious colds and other dust-borne diseases were much lessened among the scholars. We believe that the occasional use of such solutions on floors and surfaces in dwelling houses as well as public buildings would do a great deal towards improving public health.—*Bulletin N. C. Board of Health.*

“I HAVE but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know no way of judging of the future but by the past.”—*Patrick Henry.*